A GLITTERING HOPE AT THE DARKEST TIME: REFUGEES AND THE WESTERN SANITARY COMMISSION DURING THE CIVIL WAR

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JISUNG LEE
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A GLITTERING HOPE AT THE DARKEST TIME: REFUGEES AND THE WESTERN SANITARY COMMISSION DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Jisung Lee, Candidate for Master of Arts Degree

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ABSTRACT

By 1864, refugees from the South and the Western Border flooded into St. Louis and adjacent towns in unprecedented numbers. This influx of destitute people required aid and relief organizations in Missouri to broaden their level of operations. As the largest charity society in the Western states, the Western Sanitary Commission (WSC) answered the call for help. However, many St. Louisians, who were divided by political ideology, were not favorable to its efforts to aid these refugees. This paper focuses on the Commission's three activities to discover how it represented and defined itself amid the political conflict.

First, the Western Sanitary Commission published a report of its work on behalf of White Southern refugees whose loyalty was doubtful. The Commission observers stressed in the report that those displaced were human beings and not only refugees but also soldiers' families who deserved aid from the Union. The report was also a form of propaganda to ask

for donations and support for the Commission's work. Second, the language used by the WSC for its biggest fundraising event, the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, continually highlighted the unity of Americans. It did not mean unconditional affection for human beings. It instead indicated integration under the Union. Sharing the same nationality provided Americans with a way to identify themselves with the refugees. Lastly, the Refugee and Freedmen's Home shows how the WSC practiced its new identity in its operations. By accommodating both black and white refugees in one building, it showed race did not matter for its aid and relief movement.

In sum, the WSC members by 1864 found themselves needing to garner broader financial support and overcome opposition towards white refugees, many who hailed from Confederate states. Facing these challenges, they justified the work on behalf of the destitute as a patriotic endeavor consolidating racially and politically divided Americans under the Union's cause. In this process, they pursued a glittering hope; a new nation based on the integration of racial and political identity.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, have examined a thesis titled "A Glittering Hope at the Darkest Time: Refugees and the Western Sanitary Commission During the Civil War," presented by Jisung Lee, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.'

Supervisory Committee

Diane Mutti Burke, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Department of History

Sandra Enríquez, Ph.D.
Department of History

Andrew Bergerson, Ph.D.
Department of History

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On August 20, 1864, Chaplain A. H. Tucker sent a letter to St. Louis from a hundred miles southwestward in Rolla, Missouri, which was the Pacific Railroad's terminus, a predecessor of both the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway and the Missouri Pacific Railroad. "Refugees are constantly coming in from the Southwest. There are now over two hundred destitute families here, partly subsisted by Government."[1] The depressing message reminded the Western Sanitary Commission, the largest private aid organization in the West, of the gravity of the refugee issue that had emerged in Missouri during the previous three years. As the Civil War moved into its fourth long year, thousands of poor people from the devastated South and Border States poured into St. Louis, an economic and military hub on the Mississippi River. Starved, ragged, and sick, they were seeking clothes, food, shelter, and any opportunity to soothe their miserable fates. When Union soldiers first encountered refugees in the first year of the war, they asked their superiors what action could be taken to aid them. The military officers, however, did not have the answer because there were no integrated guidelines and authorized organization within the military to tackle this matter. Who would take care of this overflowing number of refugees, and how? Answering that question was a complicated issue for the Union starting at the outbreak of the war and throughout.

A significant positive development in aid for the destitute emerged in the summer of 1861. Ferocious battles throughout southwestern Missouri, such as in Carthage and

[1] Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission from May 9th, 1864 to Dec. 31st, 1865.* (St. Louis, Missouri: R. P. Studley and Co., 1866), 95, accessed August 5, 2020, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100209440.

Springfield, caused thousands of casualties. The wounded soldiers were brought to Rolla in army wagons and then to St. Louis by train for recovery and rest. Unfortunately, the city was not ready to accommodate such a massive number of patients. Newly opened military hospitals were also not equipped with medical necessities. At this time, William Greenleaf Eliot, a prominent citizen and minister of the Unitarian Church of the Messiah, met with Jessie Benton Frémont to tackle the problem. Mrs. Frémont was a pioneering activist and the energetic wife of General John C. Frémont, the commander of the Western Department. At their meeting, Elliot outlined his plan of establishing a comprehensive organization that would supply military needs by improving soldiers' health and welfare. After this conversation, General Frémont issued Special Orders No. 159 approving the creation of the Western Sanitary Commission (WSC). The Order initially authorized the Commission to select and furnish suitable buildings for military hospitals under the direction of the Medical Director of the Union army.[2] To operate the WSC, General Frémont appointed five commissioners, including James E. Yeatman, who would serve as the president. They all were members of Eliot's church.

The WSC opened its first hospital in August 1861 in St. Louis, to tend to the sick and wounded from the Battle of Wilson's Creek, the first major battle in the trans-Mississippi West. The hospital building, located at the corner of Broadway and Chestnut Street, was large enough to accommodate 500 patients. On the second floor of the hospital, the Commission

[2] J. G. Forman, *The Western Sanitary Commission; a Sketch of Its Origin, History, Labors for the Sick and Wounded of the Western Armies, and Aid Given to Freedmen and Union Refugees, with Incidents of Hospital Life* (St. Louis, Missouri: R. P. Studley and Co., 1864), 7, accessed August 5, 2020, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009261678.

set up its headquarters and began to hire both men and women nurses to run the institution. Yeatman was in charge of the selection and appointment of the female nurses as an agent of Dorothea Lynde Dix, General Superintendent of the Nurses in the Military Hospitals in the United States. The nurses received forty cents per day, a ration, and quarters, but the government paid only for those who worked for general hospitals. Thus, it was the WSC's duty to pay for the nurses hired for military post hospitals and the hospitals for refugees as the government did not authorize these positions.[3] The Sanitary Commission solicited wealthy citizens of St. Louis and the Mississippi River Valley, including Southern sympathizers, for needed supplies, and "the response was overwhelming."[4] Order No. 159 clarified that the WSC's objective was "to carry out under properly constituted military authorities, and in compliance with their orders, such sanitary regulations and reforms as the

[3] Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission*, 62. The government's limited support caused many women workers and teachers in the aid and relief societies to remain as volunteers. Also, the wage of female nurses was usually lower than what male nurses received. Carol Faulkner pointed out that some women agents who worked with Freedmen's Bureau received a commission for placing freedwomen in work situations. The commission helped to pay for the aid worker's subsistence at the expense of separating freedwomen from their family members. Thus, it is important to examine how the wage level of female workers in the aid organizations influenced the ways in which they treated African American refugees. For additional information, see Carol Faulkner, *Women's Radical Reconstruction: The Freedmen's Aid Movement* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 122-123.

[4] For the beginnings of the Western Sanitary Commission, see William E. Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," *Civil War History* 36, no. 1 (March 1990): 19–21, accessed August 5, 2020, https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/cwh.1990.0022.

well-being of the soldiers demand."[5] Thus, its primary jobs at this point were to help surgeons in several hospitals and to distribute supplies gathered throughout the country.

A few months later, the issue of refugees began to loom so large that the Western Sanitary Commission could not ignore it. During the fall and winter of 1861-2, the Confederate army and guerrilla forces drove many white refugees out of southwest Missouri. Looking for shelter and relief, these destitute people flooded into St. Louis. Members of the WSC saw the necessity of larger accommodations to cope with this influx of people. A year later, the successful siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi, foreshadowed the turning point of both the war and charity movements. In the first two years of the war, the refugees in St. Louis were mostly white and from the western border of Missouri and northwest Arkansas. However, Vicksburg's capture not only allowed the Union's army to march into the Deep South but also provided a massive number of black and white refugees throughout the Confederate states with a bridgehead to sail up the Mississippi River to St. Louis for aid. It was a portent of the season that would test the country's capability to take care of those destitute who risked their lives and property for its cause. However, not a few St. Louisians expressed unwillingness to help refugees in contrast to their willing support for the Union army. They questioned the loyalty of white refugees and hesitated to divert resources meant for the care of the soldiers to those poor people.

In facing the ever-increasing number of destitute and displaced civilians in Missouri and the nearby Southern states by 1864, the Commission's leaders were uncertain as to

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[5] Forman, *The Western Sanitary Commission; a Sketch of Its Origin, History, Labors for the Sick and Wounded of the Western Armies, and Aid Given to Freedmen and Union Refugees, with Incidents of Hospital Life*, 7.

whether they could continue serving the needs of all of them. Likewise, the citizens' skepticism led them to ponder how to appeal to the Union public to help the work on behalf of refugees and freedpeople. This essay argues that by 1864 the Commission members found themselves pressured to gather broader financial support and overcome opposition toward white refugees, many who hailed from Confederate states. Facing these challenges, the WSC justified the work on behalf of the destitute as a patriotic endeavor consolidating racially and politically divided Americans under the Union's cause.

In the past twenty years, scholars have turned their attention to the topics of refugees and the work of aid organizations during the Civil War. Prior to this recent scholarship few historians had worked to identify and place these subjects at the mainstream of historical discourse. Historian William Earl Parrish provided the first historical analysis of the WSC. In his 1990 article, "The Western Sanitary Commission," he lamented that no research had been done on the Commission despite its crucial role in aiding the wounded soldiers and refugees in the West. Thus, he put more focus on introducing the origin, leadership, organization, success, and hardships of the charity group rather than interpreting it from a particular perspective. Paula Coalier's "Beyond Sympathy: The St. Louis Ladies' Union Aid Society and the Civil War," also published in 1990, explored the wartime activities of the Ladies' Union Aid Society (LUAS), the WSC's most well-known auxiliary organization. Although her scholarship is similar to Parrish's in that they both cover a comprehensive narrative of the charity groups, Coalier leans toward connecting the LUAS to the bigger picture of American women's history. This point of view became clear when she concluded that, "relief work and

the aid associations wrought some permanent, if hard to measure, changes in the psyche of American women."[6]

In the 2000s, historians reinterpreted charity work in the Civil War through the lens of women's experience. *In Her Place: A Guide to St. Louis Women's History* (1999), written by Katharine T. Corbett, could be considered a prelude of this trend. She traced women's participation in Missouri's largest city from the colonial period to the 1960s, providing a detailed bibliography on each topic with visual and statistical sources. As this book was designed to be a guidebook for researchers, it was closer to an essay collection on different subjects than to a definitive historical narrative. Corbett did not evaluate the significance of the aid and relief movement during the Civil War. However, by describing the experiences of women refugees, nurses, and charity workers, she revealed how St. Louis women pushed the boundaries of their place in political, economic, and social areas, where their male counterparts dominated. Judith Ann Giesberg's book, *Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition* (2000), was another example of the historiographical trend. Unlike Corbett, her primary focus was to re-write the story of women workers in the largest wartime charity organization in the framework of women's reform. According to historian Carol Faulkner, scholars have regarded the organization "as one phase in the transformation of benevolence from the religious, humanitarian reforms of the

[6] Paula Coalier, "Beyond Sympathy: The St. Louis Ladies' Union Aid Society and the Civil War," *Gateway Heritage: The Magazine of the Missouri Historical Society* 11, no. 1 (1990): 50.

antebellum period to the organized, scientific charity of the Gilded Age."[7] However, Giesberg argued that women created a new political culture that bridged the antebellum local humanitarian charity and the Progressive Era's national reform movements.[8] In this view, she interpreted the U.S. Sanitary Commission's women members as "the first generation of professional reformers."[9]

The rivalry between the Western Sanitary Commission and the U.S. Sanitary Commission (USSC) also attracted scholars' attention in the early 2000s. Robert Patrick Bender's "'This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise': The Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair of 1864 and the Practice of Civil War Philanthropy" (2001) explored the WSC's largest

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[7] Carol Faulkner, "Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition (Review)," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32, no. 1 (May 1, 2001): 141.

[8] Judith Ann Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000). Compared with earlier historians' works, Giesberg's view reveals changed recognition of scholarship on women's contribution to the Civil War. In *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War* (1998), historian Jeanie Attie described women as a defender of local and domestic charity against the U.S. Sanitary Commission's (USSC) plan for a centralized relief organization. Examining gender conflict exposed by wartime relief works, she argued that the USSC's male leadership and female members made 'gender compromise.' In other words, women earned autonomy in local aid societies by accepting that their charity work belonged to the domestic and sentimental sphere rather than political or economic labor. In this argument, these women workers' role in the war is somewhat limited compared to Giesberg's description of them as creators. For more information of the U.S. Sanitary Commission and its first executive secretary, Frederick Law Olmsted, see Loura Wood Roper, *F.L.O.: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), and Elizabeth Stevenson, *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Transaction Publishers, 1977). Unfortunately, only one historiography has been published about Henry Whitney Bellows, the USSC's president: Clifford E. Clark, "Religious Beliefs and Social Reforms in the Gilded Age: The Case of Henry Whitney Bellows," *The New England Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1970): 59-78, accessed August 5, 2020, doi:10.2307/363696.

[9] Judith Ann Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 154.

fundraising event. He empathized with the WSC's struggle to balance centralization and localization in the wartime philanthropy against the USSC's more organized and systematic approach. For Bender, the Sanitary Fair's success demonstrated the superiority of the WSC's method in the Western region, arguing that the Western Sanitary Commission "proved to be the equal of its rival."[10] In his article, Parrish also highlighted the rivalry between the two charity groups from the birth of the WSC. Collectively, this body of literature indicates that establishing a unique identity that differed from the USSC was an essential task for the founders of the WSC.

Recent scholars have started to explore the issue of refugees of both races during the Civil War. Historian David Silkenat's book, *Driven from Home: North Carolina's Civil War Refugee Crisis* (2016), examined the displaced people's experiences in the Southern state. Tracing different groups of refugees, he revealed the depth of the refugee crisis in the Confederacy. For example, enslaved people who escaped to the Union military posts witnessed practical opportunities for freedom. Whereas white Carolinians, who saw their homesteads devastated by the war, began to doubt the Confederacy's ability to serve their interests. The Union soldiers also experienced the collapse of their racial bias as "the arrival of hundreds of refugee slaves challenged their ideas about race and slavery."[11] Thus, he argued that these refugees' experiences created a long-lasting effect on North Carolina

[10] Robert Patrick Bender, "'This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise': The Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair of 1864 and the Practice of Civil War Philanthropy," *Missouri Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (2001): 139.

[11] David Silkenat, *Driven From Home : North Carolina's Civil War Refugee Crisis*, UnCivil Wars (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 30.

communities. Another remarkable book on this topic, Amy Murrell Taylor's *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (2018), examined various aspects of freedpeople's lives in temporary shelters. Did escaped slaves regard these camps as their home? What were the thoughts of Union soldiers in these places? Answering these questions, Taylor attempted to "reconstruct, from the crumbling pages of military records, newspapers, and missionary reports, the way that the refugee camps looked and were experienced by those who lived there."[12] Through these stories, she aligned her argument with the most recent scholarly point of view on emancipation: former slaves did not receive freedom by the Emancipation Proclamation or other benevolence from above but obtained it through their own struggles.[13]

Building on this body of literature, my work adds to the scholarly discourse on refugees and charity organizations by exploring the experiences of those in the Western Border region. Missouri is an excellent window for the refugee crisis in a Border State. Missouri remained in the Union, yet the state's civilians were divided politically, and the state's men fought on both sides during the conflict. Although the Union army had asserted military control over the state by early 1862, a guerrilla insurgency arose in the countryside to counter what some viewed as an illegitimate military occupation. The ongoing military

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[12] Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 7.

[13] For additional information on self-emancipation, see Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (University of Georgia Press, 2010), Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Louisiana State University Press, 2012), Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United States* (Harvard University Press, 2015), and Kristen Epps, *Slavery on the Periphery: The Kansas-Missouri Border in the Antebellum and Civil War Eras* (University of Georgia Press, 2016).

conflict between Union forces and secessionist guerrilla engaged the civilian population at a high level and resulted in the displacement of many Missourians. As a result, the refugee situation in Missouri was complex. The population of displaced included white civilians who supported both the Union and the Confederacy as well as Black civilians who were fleeing slavery. As the war progressed, Black and white refugees from Confederate states also made their way north to St. Louis. Thus, the way that the refugee issue was experienced and viewed in Missouri was very different from that in most Southern states. The residents of St. Louis asked the following questions: who were these groups of destitute people, where did they come from, what were their political loyalties, what did they seek in St. Louis? This thesis strives to answer these questions as well as the ways in which the people of St. Louis responded. Who helped them, and how? Did the political divisions in Missouri affect philanthropy for refugees? If so, how did the members of charity organizations try to overcome this hindrance? Answering these questions reveals a bridge between the Civil War and Reconstruction in the West because the charity workers' vision helps us see a blueprint of the nation they imagined to build after the conflict.

In order to achieve this proposed objective, this essay examines the Western Sanitary Commission and its emphasis on unification that appeared throughout the documents written by the Commission's leaders. In detail, it focuses on three activities significant to understanding the nature of charity movements that provided aid for refugees and freedpeople: the Commission's report on white refugees from the South, the Mississippi Valley Fair, and the Refugee and Freedmen's Home. By concentrating on the WSC I make three claims. First, the Commission was a US army authorized organization established by

Special Orders No. 159.[14] When the WSC was formed, its primary responsibility was to improve Union soldiers' health and welfare. However, General Henry W. Halleck, the successor of Frémont, soon relegated the task of taking care of the refugees to the WSC as well. This fact indicates that the WSC was acting as an agent of the Union army in that matter. Thus, the WSC's activities reflect how aid and relief on behalf of the refugees generally operated in Missouri. The second reason derives from the diverse nature of the Commission's work. As it became the largest charity organization in the Mississippi Valley, the Sanitary Commission's influence on destitute people's aid varied from providing them with food and clothing to establishing shelters and schools. This point enables us to obtain a comprehensive knowledge of charitable relief by analyzing the WSC's work. The Sanitary Commission's relationship with local aid societies also leads to the last important point. In the process of helping the poor, the WSC actively cooperated with several associated organizations such as the Ladies' Union Aid Society. Many charitable women worked for multiple aid associations, and sometimes two different smaller organizations collaborated on one project under the Sanitary Commission's direction. Thus, these points intimate the possibility that tracking such interwoven relationships between the WSC and its auxiliary organizations could reveal the unifying features of aid and relief work.[15]

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[14] The status of the Western Sanitary Commission as an independent institution was sometimes threatened especially after the removal of General Frémont in November, 1861. Nevertheless, the concerns about the commission's authority seems to have completely disappeared by 1862. Parrish, 23-24.

[15] According to Bender's argument, "whereas the USSC sought "absolute subordination," the WSC maintained more democratic relation." Bender, "This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise," 131.

The main primary sources for this research are the reports, circular letters, and books written by the leaders of the Commission, such as William Greenleaf Elliot, James E. Yeatman, and J. G. Forman. These documents enable us to comprehend how their thoughts on the refugee issue were formed and developed over the years. Local newspapers are also a significant resource.[16] They provide vivid pictures of Missouri towns facing an influx of refugees and suggest how political divisions in the state influenced Missourians response. Lastly, books published after the war about relief work and the WSC cannot be overlooked.[17] These papers may not be the most accurate witness as they were published in the early twentieth century; however, these accounts fill the holes that the other primary sources do not cover.

[16] The list of newspapers used in this essay is here: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, *The Daily Missouri Democrat* (St. Louis, Missouri), *The New York Times*, and *The Weekly Herald and Tribune* (St. Joseph, Missouri).

[17] W. R. Hodges's *The Western Sanitary Commission and What It Did for the Sick and Wounded of the Union Armies from 1861 to 1865* (1906) may be the first history book about the WSC written from outside. It helps historians see how the progress of the war affected the Commission's acts. Earl S. Fullbook's article, "Relief Work in Iowa During the Civil War" (1918), is not entirely related to this essay's topic but provides a witness to the refugee crisis in St. Louis 1864. Two years after the war's end, Linus Pierpont Brockett and Mary C. Vaughan published a book, *Woman's Work in the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism and Patience* (1867). This commemoration work enables us to see the ways in which women were involved in the war and remembered.

CHAPTER 2

THE REFUGEE ISSUE BETWEEN 1862 AND 1864

Many modern English speakers may be surprised when they see the word 'contraband,' which means illegally imported material goods, used to describe Black refugees in Civil War documents. However, in the 1860s, this was the name given to enslaved people who escaped to the Union line, as people of the time did not count them as a 'refugee.' The term 'Contraband' for black refugees was established soon after the war's outbreak. Federal army and government representatives began to reason that the Confederate states' secession should result in the forfeit of Confederate "property" that was used to profit their military cause. They also reasoned that the southern states' attempt to leave the Union abrogated any claim for the return of enslaved people under the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. On May 24, 1861, three enslaved people fled to Fortress Monroe in Virginia. Interested in their information and labor, the camp commander General Benjamin F. Butler declared that these fugitive slaves were 'contraband of war.' The term quickly acquired public use throughout the Union. According to the historian Silvana R. Siddali, "because Butler's action did not portend widespread emancipation, it was popular on the Union home front, and many northerners, even the 'venerable gentleman who wears gold spectacles and reads a conservative daily [paper]' cheerfully adopted the word 'contraband' as a nickname for fugitive slaves."[1]

Lexico, a collaborative online dictionary between Dictionary.com and Oxford University Press, defines the word '*Refugee'* as, "a person who has been forced to leave their

[1] Silvana R. Siddali, *From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 52–53.

country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster."[2] As it originated from a French word '*Réfugié*' meaning "gone in search of refuge," it could be used to describe displaced people of any race. However, in most of the historical documents from the Civil War period, the term only referred to white people. Historian Kate Masur argued that, refugee "never caught on as a word for displaced (and implicitly Unionist) African Americans, notwithstanding the *Christian Recorder* correspondent's call for the term's use in place of 'contraband.'"[3] According to Masur, such a different use of language came from the idea that a person could possess another.[4] When one says refugee, it would indicate a person. However, when one says contraband instead, it would mean a material object.[5]

"Early in 1862," historian William Parrish wrote, "the WSC was called upon to expand its operations."[6] The new task, taking care of black and white refugees, became so momentous in Missouri that a charity had to be created to aid them, especially the displaced whites from Southwest Missouri. J. G. Forman, the secretary of the Commission, also recalled about white refugees that "during the fall and winter of 1861-2 many refugees were

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[2] "Definition of Refugee by Lexico," accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/refugee.

[3] Kate Masur, "'A Rare Phenomenon of Philological Vegetation': The Word 'Contraband' and the Meanings of Emancipation in the United States," *The Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (2007): 1082, accessed August 5, 2020, https://doi.org/10.2307/25094596.

[4] She also argued that "Circulation of the term '"contraband"' exposed the constraints on Northerners' visions for former slaves." Ibid., 1083.

[5] For this reason, I decided to stay away from using contraband for black refugees in this essay except citing it from other sources.

[6] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 24.

driven, by the rebels, from the interior and southwest parts of Missouri to St. Louis, and were in a condition of want and suffering."[7] Violent conflicts between pro-Unionists and pro-Secessionists forces erupted in Missouri after the outbreak of the Civil War, even though the Missouri Constitutional Convention voted against secession. Through the Battle of Wilson's Creek in August 1861, the Union army gained an advantage over the Confederacy in the Missouri theater of the war. In October 1861, a rump of secessionists under Maj. General Sterling Price and former Pro-Southern Missouri governor Claiborne Fox Jackson desperately declared the state's secession, but it failed to reverse the Convention's decision. Nevertheless, smaller battles continued throughout Missouri until the Confederate army was completely pushed down to Arkansas at the end of the year. It was after the Battle of Pea Ridge in northwest Arkansas in March 1862 when the Union army succeeded in securing control of Missouri. There was no formal Confederate army presence in the state for the duration of the war, with the exception of two raids out of Arkansas in 1863 and 1864. According to historian Leslie A. Schwalm, "the struggle between a Confederate state government in exile and both a pro-Union and a pro-slavery state government in residence helped turn Missouri into a theater of guerrilla warfare."[8] Merciless raids, pillages, and banditries by both pro-Union Jayhawkers and pro-Southern Bushwhackers not only divided communities by politics but also ruined numerous homes and farms, causing myriad civilians

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[7] Forman, *The Western Sanitary Commission; a Sketch of Its Origin, History, Labors for the Sick and Wounded of the Western Armies, and Aid Given to Freedmen and Union Refugees, with Incidents of Hospital Life*, 124.

[8] Leslie A Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora : Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest*, 1st ed., The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 51.

to become refugees.[9] On July 2, 1862, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* reported that Warrensburg "is full of refugees."[10] Sixteen days later, it brought more news from Fort Scott, Kansas, stating that "a great many refugees from Missouri have come over to Kansas during the past spring."[11] We do not know what number the terms like 'many,' 'great,' and 'full' indicate in those records. However, we can assume the profile of the poor people gathered into Warrensburg, Fort Scott, and St. Louis. Given from where they were driven out, they were likely the victims of the guerrilla attacks or Union troop movement along the Missouri-Kansas border.

Waves of these refugees initially set course toward St. Louis. Most of the reasons many refugees gravitated toward St. Louis were concerned with its environment. The presence of the Union military in the city provided the displaced people a relative feeling of safety. In May 1861, General Nathaniel Lyon captured the pro-Southern militia that state

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[9] The term Jayhawker indicates "bands of robbers, associated with the Kansas Free-Stater cause, who rustled livestock and stole property on both sides of the state line" during the Bleeding Kansas episode. After the start of the Civil War, many of these men served in Union army units that used tactics similar to those used by Free State guerrillas. Likewise, Bushwhacker stands for "Missourians who fled to the rugged backcountry and forests to live in hiding and resist the Union occupation of the border counties. They fought Union patrols, typically by ambush, in countless small skirmishes, and hit-and-run engagements." They also attacked Unionist civilians and worked to maintain slavery in Missouri. For information of these two guerrilla forces, see Tony O′ Bryan's articles in https://civilwaronthewesternborder.org, as well as Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (Oxford University Press 1990), and Joseph M. Beilein,Jr., *Bushwhackers: Guerrilla Warfare, Manhood, and the Household in Civil War Missouri* (Kent State University Press, 2016).

[10] Editors Missouri Democrat, "From Warrensburg, Mo.," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 2, 1862, accessed March 24, 2020. http://newspapers.com.

[11] Editors Missouri Democrat, "From Fort Scott.," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 18, 1862, accessed March 24, 2020. http://newspapers.com.

governor Jackson had convened at Camp Jackson on the western edge of the city. After that point, St. Louis functioned as a significant supply depot for the Union army in the Western and Trans-Mississippi Theaters. It also became the headquarters of both the Department of the West and later the Department of the Missouri. Unquestionably political conflicts between Unionists and Southern sympathizers continued in St. Louis and Missouri after the so-called Camp Jackson Affair. Although the state remained in the Union, former slaves residing in the city had to endure the risk of capture and re-enslavement by kidnappers.[12] Nevertheless, refugees of both races viewed St. Louis as much safer than in the countryside, particularly along the Western Border, where guerrilla attacks continued. The city also provided access to basic necessities for living. Benton Barracks, for instance, established in 1861 at the site of the St. Louis Fairgrounds by order of General Frémont, contained a military hospital with several subsidiary facilities. The Union army converted an amphitheater on the property to build the hospital that was the largest in the West and could accommodate several thousand people. Many of refugees were women and children in feeble conditions of health. Thus, those places might be an appropriate destination for them to expect to receive some necessary aid, including food, clothing, and housing.

Transportation was also one of the most crucial factors that induced former slaves and refugees to flee to St. Louis. Located at the center of the Mississippi River, which cuts through the United States, the city attracted people coming up from the Southern states via steamboat. Furthermore, the Illinois and Michigan Canal opening in 1862 enabled those who

[12] Sharon Romeo, *Gender and the Jubilee : Black Freedom and the Reconstruction of Citizenship in Civil War Missouri*, Studies in the Legal History of the South (University of Georgia Press, 2016), 34.

traveled the waterways to reach the bigger cities, such as Chicago. Likewise, the Missouri River brought the escaping people from the Western Border to the eastern edge of the state. The rapid growth of the railroad system also made St. Louis a more desirable destination for refugees. Missouri's first railroad, the Pacific Railroad, barely reached Tipton in central Missouri in 1858. As there was yet no bridge crossing the Mississippi River, no train came directly to St. Louis from the eastern states. However, the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad linked Illinoistown (later East St. Louis) to Cincinnati, transporting troops during the war. Once individuals crossed the river, they also could travel from Alton, about twenty miles northeast from St. Louis, to Chicago, by the Alton and Sangamon Railroad. Thus, acquaintances and families of the refugees in safe places appealed to the St. Louis municipal government to "furnish transportation as they [the refugees] arrived here [St. Louis] on their way to friends in Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa, or to take care of them a few months till they can help themselves."[13]

The presence of many private aid and relief societies also made St. Louis an appealing destination for black and white refugee. In addition to the Western Sanitary Commission, other benevolent societies, such as Ladies' Union Aid Society, also had their headquarters in the city. Namely, all the donations to these charity associations from the Northern states were gathered at St. Louis before they were distributed to refugee camps in other towns such as Rolla, Pilot Knob, and Springfield. For example, when officials in military posts or hospitals in these places called on the WSC for help, the Commission

[13] J. G. Forman, "The Western Sanitary Commission: What It Does with Its Funds, Why It Should Be Aided in Its Work," *The Missouri Democrat*, March 16, 1864, accessed August 5, 2020, http://turnerbrigade.org/history/md18640304/md18640316a/.

dispatched its agents with supplies secured through donations from Massachusetts or elsewhere. Thus, destitute people in St. Louis might have a higher possibility of acquiring those supplies and working opportunities than those in the other cities.

In response to the urgent call for help, the Western Sanitary Commission implemented its mission of aiding the refugees and freedpeople vigorously. The WSC immediately "appropriated $3,800 and a large amount of clothing to their relief and opened a home to serve as a temporary way station for new arrivals."[14] As the battlefront widened to Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi over the next years, more civilians left their devastated home and flooded into Missouri and St. Louis. Thus, the Commission expended its budget to $72,000 (equivalent in purchasing power to $ 2,109,248.18 in 2020[15]) and more than $40,000 in contributed supplies by 1865.[16] The WSC also bought houses to shelter people and established temporary schools to teach them basic skills such as literacy, cooking, or sewing before they were transported to a more permanent home and job.

For many formerly enslaved people, St. Louis became a simple pit stop. General Samuel Ryan Curtis, commander of Department of Missouri after Halleck, thought black refugees would not be safe in Missouri, where slavery remained legal. Thus, he wanted to send them quickly out of the state to Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, according to employers' applications. In April 1863, Brigadier-General Henry Hastings Sibley requested a large number of black refugees; he needed more men as teamsters or cooks for his expedition

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[14] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 24.

[15] "Inflation Calculator," accessed August 5, 2020, http://www.in2013dollars.com.

[16] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 25.

against the Sioux Uprising in Dakota.[17] Likewise, the WSC relocated white refugees to the western free states for employment when they could not go back to their home, family, or friends.

The needs of black refugees began to appear in a few charity organizations' records by 1863. According to J. G. Forman, the Western Sanitary Commission's "first attention was called to the sufferings of these people[freedpeople] at Helena, in the beginning of the winter of 1862-3, where there were between three and four thousand, men, women, and children."[18] As a strategic point to maintain control over the Mississippi River, the city was both a significant fortification and supply depot for the Union army in the Vicksburg campaign.

However, nursing the sick and wounded soldiers from the battlefield was yet the foremost duty of the WSC, consuming almost all of its resources. Although agents from the charity organizations reported the gravity of the black and white refugee affairs, their reports did not seem to indicate extensive policies to aid the destitute. For example, the WSC report issued in June 1863 called the issue of the freedpeople in Helena, Arkansas, "incidental work." The Commission sent down an agent, Maria R. Mann, to the city with clothing and sanitary stores to set up a hospital and camp for women and children. It is unknown who accompanied her. Likewise, the Commission delegated almost the entire work of taking care of the white refugees, including the distribution of collected funds and supplies, to John

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[17] Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora*, 76, 77, 116.

[18] Forman, *The Western Sanitary Commission; a Sketch of Its Origin, History, Labors for the Sick and Wounded of the Western Armies, and Aid Given to Freedmen and Union Refugees, with Incidents of Hospital Life*, 110–111.

Cavender, an old prominent St. Louisian who devoted his whole time to this task.[19] These examples reveal that until 1863 the WSC did not consider the refugee crisis a priority or at least uncontrollable.

However, the following year the refugee situation expanded dramatically, necessitating the need for aid and relief work in Missouri. The warning appeared in August 1863. Forman recalled, "there began to be further arrivals of destitute refugees from Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas."[20] To make the matter worse, Cavender was severely sick and died during the winter of 1863. On March 16, 1864, a local newspaper, *the Missouri Democrat*, brought St. Louis civilians news about the state of the poor whites coming up the Mississippi River. The newspaper stated, "families of these destitute people are arriving every day at St. Louis, to whom shelter, food and some additions to their clothing must be given. Large numbers of them still remain at Rolla, Pilot Knob, Cairo, Memphis, Vicksburg, and Nashville, and others are at Fort Scott and Leavenworth, Kansas."[21] Continuing battles in the South destroyed homes in those places and eventually drove residents to resettle anywhere that guaranteed their survival. Guerrilla attacks in the Western Theater continued and General Sterling Price, once pushed back to Arkansas, returned to Missouri with 12,000 troops in August 1864. Price's Raid failed to accomplish any military object the Confederate army targeted. However, he cut a swath from Pilot Knob

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[19] Forman, 124-5.

[20] Ibid., 125.

[21] Forman, "The Western Sanitary Commission: What It Does with Its Funds, Why It Should Be Aided in Its Work." Though this source seems reliable, it needs to be verified as it is from a website of a reenacting organization.

to Kansas City, destroying properties all over the state. A book published in 1906 by Captain W. R. Hodges on the WSC described the unfortunate result of the Raid. He stated, "in consequence of the invasion of Missouri by Price in the fall of 1864, thousands of Union refugees, wholly destitute, came to St. Louis."[22] Furthermore, the growth in the number of freedpeople in the Mississippi Valley area steeply rose from the previous year. Particularly in St. Louis, according to the historian Sharon Romeo, the "African American population grew by 600 percent between the 1860 and 1870 censuses."[23] About their sudden increase, Parrish also commented that "Grant's Vicksburg campaign compounded the contraband problem."[24] Indeed, by 1864, the freedpeople and refugees from Missouri and the Southern states "became very numerous in St. Louis and the adjacent territory."[25]

The Western Sanitary Commission's stance on the refugee issue also changed that year. Observing the ever-increasing need for help, the WSC "felt itself called upon to devote

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[22] W. R. Hodges, *The Western Sanitary Commission and What It Did for the Sick and Wounded of the Union Armies from 1861 to 1865 : With Mention of the Services of Companion James E. Yeatman Therewith : Read Before the Commandery of the State of Missouri Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, February 3, 1906* (St. Louis, Missouri, 1906), 11, E631.5.A8 H6 1906, St. Louis Mercantile Library. The military's purpose in publishing this book is unknown. However, its first page says that it was "read before the Commandery of the State of Missouri." Also, page fourteen states that "little is known of thousands who were working with loving hearts and willing hands to assuage the anguish of the sick and wounded our armies." These clues indicate that the army at the moment might try to do some commemoration work of the charity organizations during the Civil War.

[23] Romeo, *Gender and the Jubilee*, 33.

[24] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 29.

[25] Earl S. Fullbook, "Relief Work in Iowa During the Civil War," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 16, no. 2 (1918): 192.

a portion of its labors to the relief of 40,000 freedmen along the banks of the Mississippi River from Columbus to Natchez."[26] Later that year, however, James E. Yeatman, the president of the WSC, made a special trip to Helena, Arkansas, and down to "the [Mississippi] river to ascertain and report the actual condition."[27] Based on this experience, he proposed in his report leasing plantations in the region for refugees of both races.[28] Responding to a rapidly growing number of white refugees in St. Louis, he also rented the house at 39 Walnut Street in the city on September 1, 1863, which accommodated displaced people a year. The superintendent of this facility, J. G. Forman, bridged the charity group and the government because of his unique position as a Secretary of the WSC and Chaplin of the Union army. However, the Commission desperately felt the necessity of a larger sized institution. Meanwhile, leaders of the Commission sent a letter to President Lincoln in November 1863, expressing their frustration about the condition of freedpeople in the Mississippi Valley. The leaders described that "there are probably not less than fifty thousand, chiefly women and children, now within our lines, between Cairo and New Orleans, for whom no adequate

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[26] Hodges, *The Western Sanitary Commission and What It Did for the Sick and Wounded of the Union Armies from 1861 to 1865 : With Mention of the Services of Companion James E. Yeatman Therewith : Read Before the Commandery of the State of Missouri Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, February 3, 1906*, 9.

[27] Ibid., 9.

[28] Although it may need to be proven, Yeatman had a clear vision of the leasing of plantations in his article. For more information, see James E. Yeatman, *Suggestions of a Plan of Organization for Freed Labor, and the Leasing of Plantations along the Mississippi River, under a Bureau or Commission to Be Appointed by the Government. Accompanying a Report Presented to the Western Sanitary Commission by James E. Yeatman, President of the Commission, Dec. 17, 1863* (St. Louis, Missouri: Western Sanitary Commission, 1863), E458 Y4 2, Special Collections General Stacks, Washington University Libraries.

provision has been made."[29] In that letter, the Commission leaders asked Lincoln for permission to extend their labor to care for the suffering of freedpeople from all over the Southern states, suggesting that "hundreds of the blacks would gladly return to slavery, to avoid the hardship of freedom; and if this feeling increases and extends itself among them, all the difficulties of the situation will be increased."[30] In this statement, the leaders imply a WSC's perspective on their work on behalf of black and white refugees.

The WSC leaders justified aiding former slaves as an effort to help the Union's victory of the war. For example, in the Helena incident, the Commission viewed aiding the freedpeople as necessary because from them, "a regiment of [freedmen] soldiers has been recruited and another is now in progress."[31] Lincoln mentioned the WSC's appeal to his War Secretary, Edwin Stanton, and indicated that the government should help the commission by any means.[32] In response to the increasing call for help, shelters, schools, and military hospitals sprang up, and new minor aid associations for the freedpeople were established in St. Louis. As historian Robert Patrick Bender described, St. Louis now "became a sanctuary

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[29] James E. Yeatman, "Circular Letter of the Western Sanitary Commission, St. Louis, to President Abraham Lincoln," November 6, 1863, D03894, Box 2, William Greenleaf Eliot Papers, 1832-1961. Missouri Historical Society Library & Research Center, accessed August 5, 2020 http://collections.mohistory.org/resource/168199.

[30] Ibid..

[31] *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission for the Year Ending June 1st, 1863.* (St. Louis, Missouri: Western Sanitary Commission rooms, 1863), 24, E631.5 .A5 1863, St. Louis Mercantile Library.

[32] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 24.

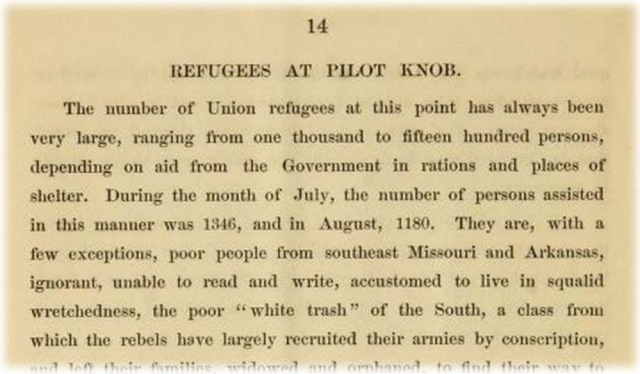
for a nearly endless stream of refugees."[33] Namely, it seems pretty evident that by 1864 the aid and relief movements were required to broaden the extent of their operation to respond to the increasing number of black and white refugees.

[33] Bender, "This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise," 134.

CHAPTER 3

THE WSC REPORT ON THE WHITE UNION REFUGEES OF THE SOUTH

The Western Sanitary Commission published an interesting report in 1864 that provides a detailed account of the aid and relief movement's history: *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, on the White Union Refugees of the South, Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts*. [Figure 1] Outlining various poignant narratives collected from all trans-Appalachian states, authors of the fifty-page booklet describe the harsh realities of a group of people neglected by most Northerners: white refugees from the Southern states.



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REFUGEES AT PILOT KNOB.

The number of Union refugees at this point has always been very large, ranging from one thousand to fifteen hundred persons, depending on aid from the Government in rations and places of shelter. During the month of July, the number of persons assisted in this manner was 1346, and in August, 1180. They are, with a few exceptions, poor people from southeast Missouri and Arkansas, ignorant, unable to read and write, accustomed to live in squalid wretchedness, the poor "white trash" of the South, a class from which the rebels have largely recruited their armies by conscription,

Figure 1: WSC report on the white Union refugees of the South 1[1]

[1] Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, on the White Union Refugees of the South, Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts* (St. Louis, Missouri: R. P. Studley and Co., 1864), 14, accessed August 5, 2020, http://archive.org/details/reportofwesterns01west.

The WSC's report remarks on the pitiable state of the impoverished whites who fled their home. Mrs. Frances D. Gage, an activist who traveled down the Mississippi River on behalf of the organization, wrote her grief at witnessing the state of the refugees: "Of the Union refugees, as I found them in June, nothing can be said but that their condition is deplorable. They were sick, suffering and dying in hovels, sheds, barns, caves, tents and fields, helpless, and I might almost say, hopeless."[2] The report also commented that people in Pilot Knob were "with a few exceptions, poor people from southeast Missouri and Arkansas, ignorant, unable to read and write, accustomed to live in squalid wretchedness, the poor 'white trash' of the South, a class from which the rebels have largely recruited their armies by conscription, and left their families, widowed and orphaned..."[3] Descriptions of poverty, hunger, and separation from male family members -- mostly husbands or fathers -- feature strongly in this report. Death also frequently occurred among such people. It was not unusual for a whole group of children to be left on the Commission's hands because their parents died on their way to a safe place. The report described the WSC's achievements in aiding the poor orphans and women. However, the authors solicited for more support in many cases, deploring the lack of supplies and the destitute refugees' miserable fate that depended upon scarce opportunities to receive a handout from benevolent citizens. The question is, why did the Commission publicize the harsh reality of these people?

A short memo in the last page [Figure 2] of the Western Sanitary Commission's report on poor white refugees unveils the intended use of this book: "Donations for the

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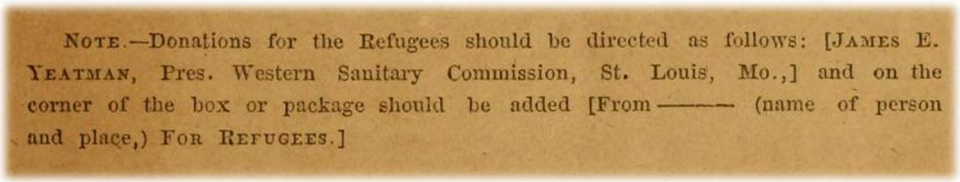
[2] Western Sanitary Commission, 41.

[3] Ibid., 14.

Refugees should be directed as follows: [James E. Yeatman, Pres. Western Sanitary Commission, St. Louis, Mo.,] and on the corner of the box or package should be added [From —— (name of person and place,) For Refugees.]"[4] This address space was for someone who wanted to donate his or her money or supplies for poor white refugees. With sentimental stories poignant enough to touch the reader's heart and asking for donations, one might say that the book was a nineteenth-century version of propaganda. The WSC wanted to improve the image of the white refugees from the South and gain support for its mission to help these people.



NOTE.—Donations for the Refugees should be directed as follows: [JAMES E. YEATMAN, Pres. Western Sanitary Commission, St. Louis, Mo.,] and on the corner of the box or package should be added [From ——— (name of person and place,) FOR REFUGEES.]

Figure 2: WSC report on the white Union refugees of the South 2[5]

The WSC's reporters constantly pointed out the poor white refugees' illiteracy and ignorance; "not more than one-tenth have been able to read and write."[6] In the 1850s, almost ninety percent of white Northern adults could read, and over eighty percent of those in the

[4] Ibid., 45.

[5] Ibid., 45.

[6] Ibid., 9.

Southern states.[7] However, the literacy rate was lower in Arkansas and Tennessee. It was even worse among the group of people profiled in the WSC report, mostly women and children from the non-slaveholding working class who rarely received educational opportunities. Many women could read by the antebellum period but many fewer learned to write. Furthermore, some could only read printed texts while others could only recognize particular handwriting, such as letters from their husbands. In the worst case, they could only figure with numbers.[8] Their incomplete ability to read and write became problematic when entangled with the process of acquiring a legal status that allowed them to get help from the Union government. Historian Stephanie McCurry wrote in her book, *Confederate Reckoning,* the way in which the refugees received help. McCurry argued that "female citizens in the occupied or defeated Confederate states lined up outside the Union provost marshal's office, the Union army commissary, or the office of freedman's bureau agent to take the oath and get relief…"[9] To be a beneficiary of the aid and relief from the Union organizations, the refugees needed to prove their loyalty to the United States by filling up or signing an oath form swearing that they did not participate in the rebellion directly or indirectly.[10]

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[7] Beth Barton Schweiger, "The Literate South: Reading before Emancipation," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 3 (2013): 333.

[8] See Schweiger's article for detail of literacy in the South.

[9] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 208.

[10] A sample of the oath can be found in https://civilwaronthewesternborder.org/essay/shadow-war-federal-military-authority-and-loyalty-oaths-civil-war-missouri

The idea of demonstrating loyalty was initially for regulating disloyal citizens remaining in the Union states. According to historian Paula Coalier, "Unionist-Secessionist tension persisted in the city's [St. Louis] civilian population."[11] As the conflict wrought a series of guerrilla attacks against Unionist civilians and the Union forces throughout the countryside of Missouri, the military authorities in St. Louis became concerned with Southern sympathizers. They considered these dissident citizens to be potential supporters of the Southern cause and the Bushwhackers. As a result, in December 1861, the Union military began to require the officers of the Mercantile Library and the Chamber of Commerce to take an oath of loyalty to the United States. If anyone declined taking the oath, then he either had to resign from his position or was arrested. With the following order on March 3, 1862, the military expanded the loyalty oath to attorneys and jurors[12], and in the summer the newly established military provost marshal system asked Missouri civilians to swear the oath in order to benefit from the protection of the Union troops, keep their guns, practice their professions, and escape the financial penalties that were levied against disloyal citizens.[13]

The Western Sanitary Commission asked, "who will care for the poor white refugees, equally the victim of a barbarous civilization with the oppressed slave, more helpless and

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[11] Coalier, "Beyond Sympathy," 40.

[12] LeeAnn Whites, *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the New South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 56.

[13] Diane Mutti Burke, "Scattered People: The Long History of Forced Eviction in the Kansas-Missouri Borderlands," in *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States*, ed. Adam Arenson and Andrew R. Graybill (University of California Press, 2015), 76.

sorrowing, and whom none seems to pity?[14] It was impossible to distinguish by appearances the loyal from the disloyal among them. Thus, for the refugees from the South, taking legal oaths of allegiance remained the only reasonable way to prove one's devotion to the Union. Historical records reveal three kinds of white refugees who poured into St. Louis and the other Union states. First, Southern civilians whose family members enlisted for the Union army or refused to obey the Confederacy's conscription order were killed, robbed, or at best forced to leave. *The Weekly Herald and Tribune* in St. Joseph reported these people's hardships. In eastern Tennessee, they were "flying to the mountains to escape the draft."[15] Second, according to an annual report of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, civilians revealed as sympathizers of the Union cause were "hunted with bloodhounds—their horses, cattle, pigs, corn, all taken from them, and, after unknown sufferings, escaped" to the Northern lines.[16] Lastly, the report exposes a specific group of refugees, who did not "conceal that their sympathies are with the South, but came away because they would starve if they remained."[17] The Commission's report stated that these refugees uniformly expressed their willingness to take the oath and claimed to be loyal citizens. However, that was where the problem arose

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[14] Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, on the White Union Refugees of the South, Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts*, 43.

[15] "The Conscription in East Tennessee," *Weekly Herald and Tribune*, April 9, 1863, accessed March 24, 2020. http://newspapers.com.

[16] *Third Annual Report of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, of St. Louis* (St. Louis, Missouri: McKee, Fishback & Co., 1864), 20, E458 Y4 2, Special Collections General Stacks, Washington University Libraries.

[17] Ibid., 20.

because they did not, the WSC report lamented, "really understand what is essential to loyalty, or the merits of the conflict in which we are engaged."[18] As many of them were illiterate women and children in desperate need of aid, many people were concerned that the refugees would not take the oath as seriously as Northerners did. The presence of the disloyal among Missouri refugees, who were dislocated by guerrilla forces from the countryside, made the loyalty issue more complicated. As a result, filtering loyal citizens from these jumbled groups was a painstaking task. Thus, some Union people, if not all, questioned the loyalty of the refugees and were hesitated to divert resources meant for the care of Union soldiers to help strangers from who might well be disloyal to the Union.[19]

According to historian W. Wayne Smith, the Union army tried to take care of the refugees at the beginning of the war. However, General Henry W. Halleck, the commander of the Department of the Missouri from 1861 to 1862, soon relegated the task to the Western Sanitary Commission.[20] He devised an ingenious but provocative idea to fund the WSC's work for aiding the destitute pouring into the city and prevent the wealth of southern

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[18] Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, on the White Union Refugees of the South, Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts*, 14. Providing testimonies of the contemporaries, Christopher Phillips interprets the oaths as a part of the dominion system of the slave states. For more information, see Christopher Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 189–92.

[19] Even about Missouri men and women, the Union soldiers and Unionists thought they lied just to secure themselves. Mutti Burke, "Scattered People: The Long History of Forced Eviction in the Kansas-Missouri Borderlands," 76.

[20] W. Wayne Smith, "An Experiment in Counterinsurgency: The Assessment of Confederate Sympathizers in Missouri," *The Journal of Southern History* 35, no. 3 (August 1969): 364, accessed August 5, 2020, https://doi.org/DOI: 10.2307/2205763.

sympathizers from supplying the rebel force. By General Orders No. 24, he levied a $10,000 assessment against sixty-four of the most prominent Southern sympathizing or disloyal households in St. Louis, "on the grounds that their fellow sympathizers had caused the refugees' plight."[21]

While some of the targeted individuals took the oath of allegiance and were exempted from the assessment, thirty-one of them resiliently protested the order, arguing that it violated not only their right to secure their property but also the right to decide where to give their charitable offerings.[22] The Union military responded to this resistance by confiscating and auctioning their properties. Some cases were resolved through harsher means. A well-known St. Louis merchant named Samuel Engler, who refused to pay the assessment, not only lost all of his possessions but also was expelled from his home city. On Jan 27, 1862, *the Daily Missouri Democrat* brought the tragic news of his fate: "He attempted to throw off a grasp of the officer, with the remark, 'I am a gentleman, sir,' or words to that effect. Of course this made no impression on the officer, and both were soon whirling over the free soil of Illinois."[23]

Once Halleck's method was proven to be useful to cover the cost of helping refugees, his junior officers began to adopt the policy. Broadly supported by radical Unionists as "a

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[21] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 24–25.

[22] Whites, *Gender Matters*, 55.

[23] "Departure of the Secessionist, Engler," *Daily Missouri Democrat*, January 27, 1862, accessed March 24, 2020. http://newspapers.com.

retaliatory measure,"[24] the levies soon swept over towns in Missouri. Historian LeeAnn Whites argued that the assessment deconstructed gender and family order in Southern sympathizers' households. Just as the guerrilla attacks on the Border State civilians did, it violated men's authority as household heads and dependents' domestic immunity.[25] Furthermore, substantiating someone's charge for sympathizing with the rebels often became complicated. Thus, as Smith pointed out, "judgment was frequently based on suspicion rather than concrete evidence."[26] Civilians began to accuse their neighbors falsely due to personal hatred against one another. Thus, the policies quickly worsened the chaotic political divisions in Missouri. Eventually, on January 20, 1863, President Lincoln intervened, and the War Department stopped imposing the assessments for a while. However, guerrilla attacks by Bushwhackers, such as William Quantrill, and General Sterling Price's raid the following year wreaked havoc in the state. As a result, the retaliation policy resumed and continued until 1865 to recover the damages.

These conflicts over assessments reveal one side of the Union's perspective on the refugee issue. General Orders No. 100, issued in April 1863, instructed commanders to

[24] "Col. Jennison and His Enemies—Fresh Trails for Kansas," *Daily Missouri Democrat*, April 24, 1862, accessed March 24, 2020. http://newspapers.com.

[25] For one researching the loyalty issue during the Civil War, Whites' book would be one of the remarkable sources with the Phillips' book. She provides in this book a very detailed explanation of the assessment and oath and how they affected the lives of the Southern sympathizers. Ibid., 51-56.

[26] Smith, "An Experiment in Counterinsurgency," 368.

"throw the burden of the war, as much as lies within his power, on the disloyal citizens."[27] The assessment policies and this Order indicates that the Union army certainly wanted to care for refugees but preferably with the resources of the rebels. A short article from *The Weekly Herald and Tribune* on September 10, 1863, provides another example of that view. On September 1, 1863, General Thomas Ewing Jr. commanded sixty Southern sympathizers in Kansas City, who were prominent residents of the city, including some of the wealthiest and most influential families, "to remove from this District." Their houses would "be taken for the families of Union refugees."[28] The incidents surrounding the assessments and Ewing's order did not only mean that the army was using the refugee issue to apply the an-eye-for-an-eye principle to the rebels, they also indicate that pro-Union citizens preferred to exploit the rebels' resources rather than sharing their possessions with poor whites due to the housing shortage in their communities and the refugees' consumption of food and fuel that drove up prices. Those refugees were, in general, nothing but another troublesome neighbor for Union citizens.

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[27] Louis S. Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, Modern War Studies (University Press of Kansas, 2001), 178.

[28] "About Sixty Persons [No Title]," *The Weekly Herald and Tribune*, September 10, 1863, accessed March 23, 2020. http://newspapers.com. This action was part of General Thomas Ewing's General Order No. 11, his response to Quantrill's August 21, 1863 raid on Lawrence, Kansas, in which the Bushwhackers killed over 160 men and boys and burned the town. Order No. 11 authorized the eviction of all disloyal citizens in Jackson, Cass, Bates, and the northern part of Vernon counties. For more information on the Lawrence Raid and Order No. 11, see Jeremy Neely, *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line*, (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 120-128.

In August 1864, a few months after the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, the biggest fundraising event held in St. Louis under the authority of the WSC, James E. Yeatman issued a booklet that publicized the Fair's great success. While the record shows that each committee of the fair collected from several thousand to tens of thousands of dollars, the actual profits from the Freedmen's and Refugees' Committee reveals an interesting imbalance. According to the document, the sum of the donations raised for the white refugees was $3,020.05 while funds given for the benefit of the freedpeople were more than double that amount at $6,115.36.[29] Although this statistical data does not represent the overall tendency of all Union donors, it suggests that they were less willing to share their money with the refugees from the Southern states than donating to the former slaves. The reasons for the result could be many, but the imbalance suggests that white refugees did not elicit as much sympathy from St. Louis Unionists.

The Western Sanitary Commission stressed two points to turn around Unionists' negative views of the white refugees. First, its report stood up for wives and children of those who were fought for or sympathized with the Union's cause. In a desperate tone, the WSC pled, "another and better class of them, however, have been faithful to the Government under every form of persecution, and are not only refugees but soldiers' families, who deserve all

[29] James E. Yeatman, "General Report of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair by James Yeatman and the Rest of the Western Sanitary Commission, August 16, 1864" (St. Louis, Missouri, 1864), D03900, Box 2. William Greenleaf Eliot Papers, 1832-1961, Missouri Historical Society Library & Research Center, 2, accessed August 5, http://collections.mohistory.org/resource/168801.

the sympathy and aid that can be given."[30] This argument accentuated the point that not all white refugees from the South were disloyal. We can connect the Commission's argument to the rhetoric they used to justify their work on behalf of the freedpeople in Helena, Arkansas. In the WSC's view, the soldiers' families were more loyal than any other classes because they suffered more violence and atrocities from the rebels for their country's cause.[31] Thus, the WSC and citizens in the loyal states needed to meet the claims from these people for help. The LUAS's third annual report brought up a similar idea: "the country must not be unmindful of the trust reposed in it by these patriotic fathers, but be enabled to present the veterans on their return, with their little ones not altogether neglected and abandoned."[32] The WSC argued that its efforts to aid the refugees would be helping the Union as well, as its beneficiaries include loyal citizens, foremost among them, soldiers' families.

Second, on behalf of the other refugees whose political identity was unknown, the WSC argued that, even if they did not understand the meaning of the war or the oath they had to swear, "they are human beings,"[33] who had been mistreated by the Confederacy. They were now throwing themselves on the mercy of the WSC. If they refused to aid them due to perceived disloyalty, they might perish. The members of the Commission did not hide their

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[30] Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, on the White Union Refugees of the South, Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts*, 14.

[31] Ibid., 14.

[32] *Third Annual Report of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, of St. Louis*, 17.

[33] Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, on the White Union Refugees of the South, Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts*, 14.

aversion to the unfaithfulness, boldness, and ignorance of these refugees. Nevertheless, they recognized them as "victims of the institution of slavery, and degraded by its influence."[34] The Emancipation Proclamation now broke the bonds of the poor whites as well as it did to the former slaves. The WSC questioned what the Union would do with these people. The report sometimes pointed out that the conditions of the white refugees were more deplorable than those of the freedpeople. Making a comparison was not the author's concern here. Instead, he tried to demonstrate that there was a neglected group of people for whom the Union citizens must care and educate. If rehabilitated, they would be assimilated into the country. This process could be finished only through "charity to the orphaned, sick, and aged; labor and compensation for the well and strong; reward for merit and punishment for crime. All this, dealt out with evenhanded justice, will soon bring harmony out of this terrible chaos."[35] Facing opposition to helping white refugees, the Commission members proposed a concept of a new political community based on integration.

The WSC's consistent emphasis on harmony appeared in other publications as well. The Commission's 1906 history carried a story of an agent who ran into two Confederate officers when he went down to a military hospital in Arkansas to provide medical supplies after the Battle of Pea Ridge. One of them told him with gratitude that "every Federal officer and man has treated us like gentlemen."[36] Likewise, the LUAS reported that the wounded

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[34] Ibid., 42.

[35] Ibid., 42.

[36] Hodges, *The Western Sanitary Commission and What It Did for the Sick and Wounded of the Union Armies from 1861 to 1865 : With Mention of the Services of*

prisoners at the Arkansas Post were "surprised to find how kindly they are treated."[37] The Union's policy toward these captives was inconsistent, depending upon various variables, such as the prisoner's rank and the army general's political position on the rebels. A part of the reason the WSC treated wounded from both sides was to encourage Confederate soldiers to have positive feelings toward the Union. Nevertheless, with the two points that the Commission made for the white refugees, these stories also suggest that the WSC attempted to fashion itself as an agency that could help heal the wounded of the war regardless of their former political identity.

Companion James E. Yeatman Therewith : Read Before the Commandery of the State of Missouri Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, February 3, 1906, 7.

[37] *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, of St. Louis* (St. Louis, Missouri: R. P. Studley and Co., 1863), 45, E458 Y4 2, Special Collections General Stacks, Washington University Libraries.

CHAPTER 4

THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY SANITARY FAIR

Although many leaders and members of the Western Sanitary Commission were from the upper and middle classes, the scale of expense needed to support black and white refugees far exceeded what they could raise without help from outside. A report from the Ladies' Union Aid Society bitterly complained about the situation: "we look with anxious apprehension towards the coming winter, with the greatly increased price of every article of family consumption."[1] Historian Robert Bender argued that, in the face of the massive need, the Commission "seriously questioned their ability to continue operations beyond 1864."[2] Likewise, William Parrish pointed out that the WSC "faced a constant problem of having adequate funds with which to carry on its work."[3]

The Western Sanitary Commission, therefore, paid much attention to fundraising activities from its beginnings, seeking donations not only in the Mississippi Valley but from throughout the country. For example, the people of New England, William Greenleaf Eliot's home region, had actively furnished the Commission with supplies and funds. In the end, the New Englanders gathered over $500,000 of cash and commodities. By the war's end, a total of $770,998.55 in donations came in from all over the Union to aid the WSC's cause.[4] The

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[1] *Third Annual Report of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, of St. Louis*, 16–17.

[2] Bender, "This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise," 118.

[3] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 33.

[4] Ibid., 33.

Commission's eastern counterpart, the United States Sanitary Commission, viewed this wide-ranged fundraising as exceeding its authority and laid blame on Eliot for raising funds in the states under the USSC's authority.

Of several fundraising activities, the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair [Figure 3] was the biggest and most effective. Held in St. Louis from May 17 to June 18, 1864, the event entertained and raised the spirits of visitors affected by the devastating war. The WSC had larger goals than simply raising money. Historian Louis S. Gerteis argued that the Fair "offered to the loyal women of the city a public recognition of their effort to defend the Union."[5] In other words, it was an opportunity to publicize the women's – and the WSC's – good works to a public audience and challenge any negative criticisms of the Commission's policies.

Figure 3: The Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair[6]

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[5] Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, 230.

[6] J. A. Scholten, "Group of Men Standing and Sitting in the Aisle at the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair (J.D. Couzins and Adaline Couzins Seated in Aisle by Public Schools

On February 1, 1864, Missouri civilians elected the executive committee and officers for the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair that would be held three months later. The process of preparing for the Sanitary Fair was described as an opportunity to unify various classes of people under one cause. The executive committee of the Fair hoped to promote interactive cooperation with the citizens and local communities. Numerous proposals for planning the Fair were sent to the committee's headquarters. After discussing the advantage of each offer, the committee decided whether or not to accept the applications. A local architect William Rumbold designed a large pavilion that served as the main building of the Fair. Following his sketch, the structure was built at Twelfth Street between Olive and St. Charles Street, near the Mississippi River. Hundreds of volunteers from the Union army helped to move the building supplies to the location. Various local organizations, such as businesses and charity associations, also participated in the Fair. The Ladies' Union Aid Society was just one of them.

The Western Sanitary Commission earned $554,591 net profit through the Sanitary Fair. Of the total amount of money, $16,720 was specifically donated to the Freedmen and Union Refugees' Department. Although the net profit per capita exceeded that raised by their rival at similar fund raising events, it was considerably less than was raised in New York and Philadelphia for the U.S. Sanitary Commission.[7] Interestingly, what gives a significant meaning to that statistic is not the amount of the donations but the presence of the refugee

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Booth)," 1864, Missouri Historical Society Photographs and Prints Collection, accessed August 4, 2020, http://collections.mohistory.org/resource/156991.

[7] Bender, "This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise," 138.

department at all. There were nearly thirty charity fairs organized in Northern cities such as New York City, Boston, and Chicago between 1863 and 1865.[8] However, according to the pamphlet published by the Freedmen and Union Refugees' Department, the St. Louis Sanitary Fair "was the first one that instituted a department of this kind." On April 23, 1864, in a letter to *the New York Times*, E.H.E. Jamieson, the Western Sanitary Commission's Secretary of Committee on Publication, also publicized that "A novel and noble feature of the fair is a special department organized on behalf of freedmen and Union refugees."[9] This evidence clearly demonstrates that the Commission had recognized helping the displaced, regardless of race, as one of the essential objectives of the Sanitary Fair. The WSC again emphasized black refugees' connection to Union soldiers. The pamphlet lamented that "the families of these accepted defenders of the Republic are homeless; are unused to the responsibilities of freedom; are destitute of all things" while the black soldiers are "surpassing all the expectations by their good conduct."[10] Thus, the citizens must protect, feed, and lead the freedpeople into a position of self-support. For the white refugees, the Commission twisted the rhetoric a little, arguing that no one could make more sacrifices "in comparison with those which have fallen to the lot of these impoverished and homeless

[8] Ibid., 119.

[9] E.H.E. Jamieson, "The Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair," *New York Times*, April 23, 1864, accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/1864/04/26/archives/the-mississippi-valley-sanitary-fair.html.

[10] *Freedmen and Union Refugees Department of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair* (St. Louis, Missouri, 1864), accessed August 5, 2020, https://archive.org/details/101156144.nlm.nih.gov.

Union refugees."[11] In the WSC's perspective, they deserved receiving aid and help because they had to endure hardships merely for hating the rebels and, in turn, being hatred by the rebels.

The language used by Fair board members reveals a remarkable point. In the Fair circular issued on February 5, 1864, they confirmed that the Western Sanitary Commission "recognizes no State lines nor sectional divisions or prejudices but treats all soldiers alike, whether from the East or West, and, so far as in its power, permits none to suffer or be neglected."[12] This statement contains most of the non-discriminatory features that the Commission had sought in their aid and relief movements. The statement directly links the Fair to the concept of integration and harmony that the WSC had stressed in their report on the white refugees. Therefore, as historian Bender claimed, "the commission did not portray itself as the rigid champion of strict localism" in the rivalry against the United States Sanitary Commission, the representative of a centralized aid organization.[13] However, these anti-discrimination sentiments do not mean that the WSC had unconditional affection for their fellow human beings. The motivation for their sympathy did not just derive from the poignant stories of these people. One more element was needed to make the narrative complete, and the Fair circular indicates what it was: "In undertaking this great task, the undersigned rely, not only upon the people of St. Louis and Missouri, but upon all their

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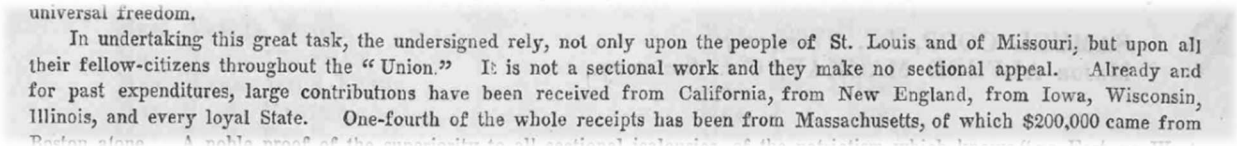
[11] Ibid.

[12] "Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair Circular," 1864, Library of Congress, accessed August 5, 2020, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.0860100c.

[13] Bender, "This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise," 128.

fellow-citizens throughout the 'Union.'"[14] [Figure 4] Integrating all citizens under one nationality did not just indicate sharing the same cause on political issues. It instead provided Americans with a way to identify themselves with the refugees. In other words, sharing the same nationality was a tie that connected one person's heart to another's. Thus, the aid and relief societies often combined patriotism with the issue of black and white refugees not only because they hoped to encourage loyalty in people but also because they could not bear to see the suffering of a neighbor who shared the same national identity.


universal freedom.

In undertaking this great task, the undersigned rely, not only upon the people of St. Louis and of Missouri, but upon all their fellow-citizens throughout the "Union." It is not a sectional work and they make no sectional appeal. Already and for past expenditures, large contributions have been received from California, from New England, from Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and every loyal State. One-fourth of the whole receipts has been from Massachusetts, of which $200,000 came from

Figure 4: The Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair Circular[15]

There are two anecdotes historians often cite to discuss the significance of the Sanitary Fair. The first one was a discussion between the Fair leaders about wine and beer. The religious leaders and the Ladies' Union Aid Society were reluctant to grant permission for alcohol at the Fair site because of the potential dangers it could cause. The temperance advocates also thought that there should be no room for alcohol in a family-friendly event. The supporters of wine and beer, however, argued that prohibition of alcohol would discourage many German immigrants who had shown enthusiastic support for the Union.

[14] "Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair Circular," 1864.

[15] Ibid.

After two failed votes to ban selling alcohol, General Rosecrans finally ended up issuing General Orders No. 6 that prohibited alcohol only within five blocks of the fairgrounds.

Figure 5: The Café Laclede[16]

The second story is related to a racial issue. When the Reverend Henry Nelson and his two African American companions entered the Café Laclede [Figure 5] in the fairground, several white waitresses refused to serve them. Although Bender's and Parrish's accounts contradict each other about how the story ended, it seems clear that there was a minor

[16] J. A. Scholten, "Group of Women in the Cafe Laclede Area at the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair," 1864, Missouri Historical Society Photographs and Prints Collection, accessed August 4, 2020, http://collections.mohistory.org/resource/157208.

disturbance.[17] One could point out the Fair's limitations on racial and social integration by citing those two stories. However, when General Rosecrans suggested a compromise about the prohibition of alcohol at the Fair site, and when a waitress, if we follow Parrish's ending of the Café Laclede story, came forward to serve Reverend Nelson and his African-American companions, the fair demonstrated the hope for American unification that the Western Sanitary Commission had sought. As an observer of the fair commented, it became a "mighty agency for curing us of our selfishness."[18]

[17] Bender's article states that authorities quickly removed Nelson and his party from the fairground whereas Parrish explains that the ministers held their ground, and a waitress finally agreed to serve them. For detail, see Bender, "This Noble and Philanthropic Enterprise," 137, And Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 34.

[18] Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis*, 230.

CHAPTER 5

THE REFUGEE AND FREEDMEN'S HOME

By 1864, the on-going black and white refugees crisis led the Western Sanitary Commission to engage in larger scale projects to accommodate the increasing number of displaced people. In November 1864, the Commission communicated with the military authorities in St. Louis about a new ambitious project in cooperation with the auxiliary groups. The Refugee and Freedmen's Home, as its name indicates, was created to provide a shelter and a school for the refugees of both races. It was designed to eventually replace the facilities at Benton Barracks, as these buildings were originally stables built for horses and cattle and thus unable to provide tolerable accommodations. In June, the WSC already attempted to secure a portion of Benton Barracks and build large shelters for that purpose. However, near the completion, these buildings were accidentally burnt to the ground. The Commission's firm obsession with extensive accommodations did not just derive from its desire to provide more shelter to the dislocated people in St. Louis. The WSC's ultimate goal for such projects was to "bring all the destitute refugees, now subsisting on the Government at Springfield, Rolla, Pilot Knob, Cape Girardeau and elsewhere, to a central point, where they can be more easily sent to homes and places of employment; saving, also, the transportation of the rations now allowed to them, and bringing them under a better supervision than can otherwise be given."[1] The Commission felt the necessity for a hub to control the refugee affair.

[1] Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, on the White Union Refugees of the South, Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts*, 6.

A "building, formerly known as the Lawson Hospital, on the Broadway, fitted up for this purpose by the government, being empty, was secured for a Refugee and Freedmen's Home, and made capable of receiving six hundred persons."[2] Major General Grenville M. Dodge, the new commander of the Department of the Missouri, was more favorable to the controversial funding method than his predecessor William S. Rosecrans. As the municipal government could not afford the expansive task, "he soon authorized his quartermaster to expend $10,000 for renovating the building and levied assessments on the secessionists to reimburse the army."[3] Under the superintendence of the secretary of the Commission, J. G. Forman, the WSC entirely furnished the building. The institution accommodated refugees and former enslaved people in racially separated quarters.[4] Over the next six months, from February 1 to July 10, 1865, the Home provided three thousand people with clothes, food, shelter, and medical care. A significant focus of the institution was its educational mission. All healthy beneficiaries of the Home were not only required to do housework, cooking, and laundry but also to take some basic classes. They were paid an average wage, and their teachers were mostly volunteers.

The remarkable point of this project is the way in which the Sanitary Commission managed the Refugee and Freedmen's Home in cooperation with two different charity

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[2] Western Sanitary Commission, *Final Report of the Western Sanitary Commission*, 107.

[3] Smith, "An Experiment in Counterinsurgency," 378.

[4] Katharine T. Corbett, *In Her Place: A Guide to St. Louis Women's History* (St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1999), 88.

organizations: the Ladies' Union Aid Relief Society (LUARS) and the Ladies' Freedmen's Relief Association (LFRA). Leaders from each group, such as Mmes. Anna Clapp and Lucien Eaton, took charge of handling the institution's internal affairs, as well as the furnishing of material for and the making of clothing. Parrish briefly explains the relationship between the WSC and the other organizations as follows: "Typical of the many such organizations springing up around the country, these, and other groups organized later in St. Louis County, became the Commission's principal auxiliaries, although it soon began receiving support and supplies from similar societies across the country."[5] This explanation implies that the WSC sometimes worked together with local aid or relief societies in operating its shelter, orphanage, and school. When it worked for freedpeople, it cooperated with a group like the LFRA. Likewise, when it helped white refugees, the LUARS was likely its partner. If that assumption is correct, would there be a possibility that some smaller and auxiliary aid or relief societies were likely devoted to only one race? Examining the character and relationship between these local organizations suggests the answer.

On July 26, 1861, some St. Louis ladies gathered together at Mrs. Holy's house to discuss combining loyal women's efforts into a single organization. A week after the meeting, twenty-five Unionist upper-class women in St. Louis, who gathered due to a passion for demonstrating their national loyalty, organized the Ladies' Union Aid Society, the most well-known auxiliary organization of the WSC. Anna L. Clapp served as its president, and Jessie Benton Frémont was a member too. The LUAS started its first mission in response to the carnage of Battle of Wilson's Creek in southeast Missouri. Until the Society disbanded after

[5] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 21.

the war, more than 200 members cared for the wounded soldiers in the military hospitals, collected funds, and provided supplies for the people in need under the jurisdiction of the Union army in St. Louis.[6]

The LUAS's organizational code clarified that its membership was open to all women "as long as she brought 'satisfactory proof' of her Union loyalty and used her influence in advancing the cause of the same."[7] However, in the beginning, the Aid Society confined its interests to aid for the soldiers of the Union army. This provision changed two years later to include "all who suffer in the cause of the Union, and also sick and wounded prisoners of war."[8] The discussion of supporting black refugees occurred on January 16, 1863. "Feeling the 'deepest commiseration for this class of fellow beings,' the women nevertheless considered it 'unjust to divert the fund [e]ntrusted to this society for the relief of the sick and wounded soldiers, to any other use than that for which the money was intended.'"[9] The decision was controversial, and a loss ensued from it. Soon after the meeting, the LUAS received news of the establishment of "a distinct society, under the name of the 'Contraband Relief Society.'" The Aid Society's report lamented, "the formation of this [Contraband Relief Society] and the 'Cherokee Relief Society,' deprived us of many of

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[6] Corbett, *In Her Place*, 85.

[7] Coalier, "Beyond Sympathy," 43.

[8] *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, of St. Louis*, 46. See also, Coalier, "Beyond Sympathy," 43.

[9] Ibid., 43.

our most zealous and useful members."[10] This anecdote could be a reason to interpret the Ladies' Union Aid Society as a racially limited group.

However, the cases of the Western Sanitary Commission indicate that such an approach would be incorrect. Many donors sent their money, designating for what purpose they entrusted it to the Commission. *The Weekly Herald Tribune*'s article on May 12, 1862, reveals a typical example: the employees of Belcher's Sugar Refinery had contributed $335.50 to the WSC "for the benefit of destitute families of the sick, wounded and deceased soldiers of Saint Louis."[11] We do not know how thoroughly the charity organizations complied with these conditions. However, the Commission's report on the white Union refugees gives a glimpse of its stance on this matter:

> The Western Sanitary Commission has already expended largely more than it has received for the relief of freedmen and refugees, through private charity and from the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, and has nothing with which to meet the increasing demands that are pressing upon it this fall, and that will press still more urgently as the winter approaches. It cannot properly use the money and supplies given for the soldiers of our western armies, and the sick and wounded in hospital, for this purpose, always aiming as it has to make these humanities of the war a distinct branch of its labors.[12]

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[10] *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, of St. Louis*, 13. According to the report, the Cherokee Relief Society disbanded, but the Contraband Relief Society was in active operation. The Cherokee Relief Society would have also been to help refugees from the Cherokee and members of other tribes in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). However, the detail of this organization is unknown.

[11] "The Employees and [No Title]," *The Weekly Herald and Tribune*, May 15, 1862, accessed March 23, 2020. http://newspapers.com.

[12] Western Sanitary Commission, *Report of the Western Sanitary Commission, on the White Union Refugees of the South, Their Persecutions, Sufferings, Destitute Condition, and the Necessity of Giving Aid and Relief on Their Coming to Our Military Posts*, 44.

Both the Sanitary Commission and the Aid Society in common displayed great reluctance to divert any funds and supplies gathered for the soldiers to aid others whatever the beneficiary's race. In other words, they sharply differentiated assisting the Union soldiers from aiding black and white refugees, or they were reluctant to use their fund for any other cause than what its donors intended. It is difficult to determine which was closer to their original intention. However, in either case, the racial factor would not have had a crucial influence on their decision. Furthermore, given the WSC's hesitation in the report, the Refugee and Freedmen's Home in 1865 reveals that its operating groups somehow made a compromise to use its resource for both races. Although racial segregation remained in the building, the Commission accommodated almost the same number of black and white refugees. Thus, it might be a suitable example to reveal the ways in which the WSC treated both races through the lens of their concept of racial integration. This concept was not merely for a speech to ask for donations from the wealthy.

In 1867, to honor women's contributions to the support for the wounded and suffering people, a writer Linus Pierpont Brockett and an activist Mary C. Vaughan published a book called *Woman's Work in the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism and Patience.* Dedicating a chapter to account for the work of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, the Commission acknowledged that "this society also did a considerable work for the freedmen and the white refugees."[13] The praise itself is no surprise as the LUAS had been one of "the

[13] Brockett Linus Pierpont and Mary C. Vaughan, *Woman's Work in the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism and Patience* (Philadelphia: Zeigler, McCurdy & Co.; Boston: R. H. Curran, 1867), 633, Library of Congress, accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.loc.gov/item/02007668.

commission's principal auxiliaries."[14] The notable point is hidden in the language of the praise. If racial discrimination had led the Aid Society to help only whites, the authors would not exalt it for its work for both races. The compliment itself, therefore, indicates that the Ladies' Union Aid Society likewise ended up helping both black and white refugees.

In respect to the Ladies' Freedmen's Relief Association, historian Corbett commented that it was "organized in St. Louis in 1863 as an offshoot of the Ladies' Union Aid Society, cared for freedwomen and white refugees in two facilities."[15] The word "offshoot" could mean it was the organization established by the ladies who opposed the LUAS's decision earlier. Corbett's confirmation that the LFRA's other name was the Ladies' Contraband Relief Society makes this assumption more reliable.[16] Likewise, the Ladies' Union Aid Relief Society started a few years earlier than the LFRA as another offshoot of the Aid Society, delivering food and clothing to white refugees.[17] The presence of the LUARS might leave the other members, who left the LUAS, a precedent to follow in founding another organization like the LFRA. However, if the LUARS and the LFRA were not intimate enough to collaborate on a project, the Western Sanitary Commission would not take the risk of putting rivals together for their large-scale activity. Also, some women's names appeared as a member of several different aid and relief organizations. For example, Jessie

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[14] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 21.

[15] Corbett, *In Her Place*, 90.

[16] Ibid., 91

[17] Ibid., 87.

Benton Frémont was both a member of the Ladies' Union Aid Society and the head of the Frémont Relief Society.

On July 1, 1865, about three months after General Robert E. Lee's surrender, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* delivered the grievous news to the citizens. It said the military would close the Refugee and Freedmen's Home ten days later. Although the army promised that it would keep providing rations for the next couple of months, the closure of the biggest shelter for refugees itself might be deplorable enough to break the heart of those remaining in the institution. According to J. G. Forman, there were still 276 refugees, of whom 135 were whites, and 141 were freedpeople in the Home. Undoubtedly, many of them were middle-aged women with children, and about one-third of the total was still sick. The relatively equal number of black and white refugees in the Refugee's Home indicates that the Western Sanitary Commission held its identity as an agency for all wounded of the war to the end. What was the fate waiting for those people after the closure? Forman said, "they are about to become a charge upon the city, and will have to be sent to the hospital and the County Farm."[18] With the war's end, the aid and relief movement was reaching its end as well. These destitute were no longer refugees or contraband of the war but citizens of the new united county. Now, it was the state and city governments' turn to respond to the call for help and decide what they shall do with those who still needed aid.

[18] "Common Council, June 30," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 1, 1865, accessed March 24, 2020. http://newspapers.com.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Unlike other aid organizations, which disbanded right after the war, the Western Sanitary Commission continued its contributions to communities until 1886 when Eliot passed away.[1] According to the book on the history of the WSC published in 1906, a considerable amount of the funds collected through the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair remained unspent and continued to find usage. Through the money, after the war ended, the WSC established orphanages for the children of Union soldiers, educated and awarded scholarships to the children of descendants of Union war veterans, and provided financial support to philanthropic works.[2] The Commission was no longer the government's representative. However, that transition did not result in a change in its commitment.

After its demise, some major figures of the Ladies' Union Aid Society went on to work toward women's suffrage movement.[3] Phoebe Wilson Couzins, who was a member of the Aid Society with her mother Adeline, became the first female law graduate of Washington University. She was also the first female U.S. marshal and one of the first female lawyers in the United States. Throughout her pioneering career, she devoted herself to women's right to vote. As the WSC sought their own ideal of the new nation after the war, many charity

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[1] Parrish, "The Western Sanitary Commission," 33–34.

[2] Hodges, *The Western Sanitary Commission and What It Did for the Sick and Wounded of the Union Armies from 1861 to 1865 : With Mention of the Services of Companion James E. Yeatman Therewith : Read Before the Commandery of the State of Missouri Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, February 3, 1906*, 13–14.

[3] Coalier, "Beyond Sympathy," 50.

women like Couzins kept pursuing their lifelong dream of reform, such as women's right to vote.

How do we understand what the Western Sanitary Commission attempted to do for the black and white refugees? By 1864, demand from the ever-increasing number of destitute people from the Missouri countryside and Confederate states to the south forced the aid and relief movement in St. Louis to broaden the extent of its operations. Whether the Union army neglected or could not afford to help the growing refugee population, the task fell into the hands of the Commission. When James E. Yeatman traveled south in 1864 to check the condition of black refugee camps in the Mississippi River region, he devised a plan to lease abandoned plantations along the river as a shelter and workplace for the freedpeople. He presented the suggestion in Washington, D.C. and received authorization from the federal government to carry the program into effect. The Commission leased about 600 plantations and established schools in these areas. According to W. R. Hodges' book, "wise and humane regulations for the compensation of labor were enforced"[4] to hired former slaves. Given that the purpose of the book was to commemorate the Sanitary Commission's achievements, the regulations might not be applied as benevolently as they were stated. Nevertheless, emphasizing that their labor must be equally paid, Yeatman argued that "it is the duty of the Government to exercise a wholesome guardianship over these new-born children of freedom … [and] to see that injustice and inhumanity are not practiced upon them—to make them

[4] Hodges, *The Western Sanitary Commission and What It Did for the Sick and Wounded of the Union Armies from 1861 to 1865 : With Mention of the Services of Companion James E. Yeatman Therewith : Read Before the Commandery of the State of Missouri Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, February 3, 1906*, 10.

realize that they are freemen."[5] In this argument, he implies that harmony is an essential element that must be incorporated into the Reconstruction process. It was neither his personal opinion nor merely an excuse to ask for money from the wealthy. It was the WSC's identity that they lived by and worked toward.

Missouri Unionists and other Union's citizens were not always favorable to the idea of unity, and some classes, such as white refugees from the South, were neglected. This disregard existed among both the Union public and the army. Thus, by 1864 the Commission members found themselves pressured to gather broader financial support and overcome opposition toward white refugees, many who hailed from Confederate states. Facing these challenges, the WSC justified the work on behalf of the destitute as a patriotic endeavor consolidating racially and politically divided Americans under the Union's cause.

Historian Benedict Anderson defined a nation as a concept imagined by its members as limited, sovereign, and a community.[6] The Union's victory would guarantee upon the new nation sovereignty. Then, to whom would the nation limit the qualification to be its members? In other words, who would be eligible to receive aid from the country? Lastly, upon what principle would it establish the community in which its members shared comradeship strong enough to lead them to sacrifice their possessions for another? In an annual report published in 1864, William Greenleaf Elliot left a short comment on what the WSC had done so far: "Its Sanitary Commission, with its office in a single room sixteen feet square, claiming no

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[5] Yeatman, *Suggestions of a Plan of Organization for Freed Labor, and the Leasing of Plantations along the Mississippi River, under a Bureau or Commission to Be Appointed by the Government.*, 16.

[6] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London ; New York: Verso, 2006), 7.

authority and wishing for none, working for humanity rather than for history, has never refused any labor for the army or hospital, for prisoners or refugees, for bond or free."[7] His mention reflects the concept of a political community that the WSC members imagined in justifying their work on behalf of both black and white refugees. The war sharply divided America, and its consequences were severe in Missouri. Healing the wounds of the conflict, they pursued a glittering hope; a new nation based on the integration of racial and political identity.

This thesis traced the ways in which the refugee crisis was created, viewed, and experienced in Missouri, especially in St. Louis, during the Civil War. By investigating background stories of these people and the city, it provided an in-depth understanding of the complexity of the refugee problem in the state. Lastly, it examined how the Western Sanitary Commission overcame the opposition to helping refugees through imagining and advocating for a newly unified people and nation in the aftermath of the Civil War.

[7] William Greenleaf Elliot, *The Western Sanitary Commission* (St. Louis, Missouri: Cambridge : Welch, Bigelow, and Company, 1864), 15, WUA00068, Series 4, Box 2, Folder 10, William Greenleaf Eliot Personal Papers, 1829-1937, Washington University Archives.

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VITA

Jisung Lee was born on June 21, 1984, in Seoul, South Korea, to Jungsoon Yun and Changnam Lee. Spending most of his life in the city, he graduated from Gaepo Middle School in 1999 and Gaepo High School in 2002. After spending two and a half years of studying Mongolian at Dankook University-Cheonan, he found his heart is in history and decided to move his study to Dankook University-Jukjeon. He received a Bachelor of History degree in 2015. He received the National Grant from 2013 to graduation.

During his undergraduate years, Mr. Lee started his first career as a reporter and columnist. Working for Dbuk agency, he wrote essays about art exhibitions and charitable gatherings in South Korea. In fall 2016, he began work toward his Masters of Arts degree in History at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Staying at UMKC, he worked as a student assistant at the Marr Sound Archives. He contributed to restoring the lost portion of 78 RPM finding aid and cataloging assessed collections. He was awarded a Graduate Research Assistantship since fall 2019. Working as an assistant manager at Kemper Digital Humanities Laboratory, he has been helping digitize the Kiefer-Scholz Collection. He published on the website of African American Heritage Trail of Kanas City, Missouri, two articles related to Cherry Blossom Club and St. Stephen Baptist Church. His thesis was presented to the Missouri Conference on History in 2019. Upon completion of his degree requirements, he plans to continue a doctorate in history.